

**IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS –
A PROGRAM CASE STUDY**

Thesis

Submitted to

The School of Education of the University of Dayton

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Master of Science in Education

by

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UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Dayton, Ohio

August, 2000

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project has involved many people: people who participated in this program, people who encouraged me to write about it, and people who stood beside me and supported me while I have wrote for the past two years. I would first like to thank the coordinators of Celebration for without them this unique and beneficial program would not exist: Joan Lacy, Cathy Balbach, Kim Crowdus, Susan Sherman, Karla Blain, and Becky Steinrock. Their support, hospitality, and eagerness to assist with this research have been invaluable. I would like to thank Eric Johnson, of Educational Video Publishing, for his time and talent in preparing the Celebration video that conveys to audiences the great value of this program. I would also like to thank Dr. Patricia Hart whose wisdom and foresight linked me with this program. She has been an inspiration and mentor to me and my gratitude to her is immeasurable. I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Thomas Rueth for his support and enthusiasm for this program and the opportunity he allowed me to present this research to others. I wish to thank the girls who participated in the Celebration program for allowing me the inspiring opportunity to observe and talk with them about their experiences. This has been my favorite part.

My thanks to my loved ones: my parents, who told me that I can make a difference and have loved and supported me with each step; my grandmothers, Gladys Creo and Rosemary, who taught me about being female; and all of my family and friends who have been understanding throughout this project and its importance in my life. Finally, my husband, Joe Downing, who always stands beside me with love, support and friendship. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Statement of Problem

The period of adolescence has been identified as a crucial stage in development for most young girls. According to many reports, it is a time when self-esteem plummets, resulting in a loss of resiliency and risk-taking ability, as well as increased self-criticism and depression (Pipher, 1994). It is a time when young girls lose their vitality, their immunity to depression, and their sense of themselves and their character (Gilligan & Brown, 1992). It has been discovered that during adolescence there is a propensity for girls to hurt themselves through dieting, drug and alcohol use, unwanted sexual experiences, and by accepting harm from themselves and others (Pipher, 1994).

Significance of Research

Since the American Association of University Women (AAUW) released the 1992 study, "How Schools Shortchange Girls", research and attention has increased regarding gender differences in schools and other institutions. The AAUW study was a summary of girls that identified that sexism is highly common in schools (AAUW, 1992). The AAUW concluded that most girls suffer a decline in self-esteem by the age of 12 (AAUW, 1992).

Unequal treatment in the classroom begins in kindergarten and continues through graduate school, during which time girls are ignored, harassed, stereotyped, and demeaned, ultimately resulting in an inferior education (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Although all children experience a loss in self-esteem during adolescence, girls' self

esteem drops significantly more than boys and does not catch up (Orenstein, 1994). Therefore, girls reduced self expectations and confidence in their abilities can lead to feelings of depression and hopelessness, making them four times more likely to attempt suicide (AAUW, 1992).

The AAUW study reported that although all girls report lower self-esteem than boys the nature of their self-worth varies among different ethnic groups (AAUW, 1992). African American girls are more likely to retain their overall self-esteem during adolescence than white or Latina girls with the exception of their feelings regarding school (AAUW, 1992). Latina girls' self-esteem is the most profound dropping 38 percentage points from age 9-15, compared with a 33 percent drop for white girls and 7% for African-American girls (AAUW, 1992).

Damage to self-esteem from sexual harassment, which is defined as unwelcome sexual remarks that create a hostile learning environment, is one area in which there is high cause for concern for girls' esteem (Orenstein, 1994). Sexual teasing, stalking, and grabbing, which frequently occurs in the classroom, enforces the idea that girls are defined by their bodies (Orenstein, 1994). Without encouragement and proper information girls who feel diminished have little reason to believe that they have any recourse against sexual harassment (Orenstein, 1994).

Due to this complex and perilous stage of development, intervention by parents, schools, and outside community groups is essential. The key factor is awareness. Only when the impossible responsibilities that society imposes on adolescent girls and the current conditions surrounding their development are recognized, can they be properly addressed. Young girls need support and knowledge of the resources that are available to

them. It is an important area for a school and/or community to become actively involved in by examining solutions and identifying its own inner and outer resources.

Parents and teachers especially recognize this need as they observe changes in girls, but are usually unclear on how to help, or even gain information on the sources of the problems. The generation gap makes it even more difficult to comprehend the extreme contrast between two very different worlds: the one that young girls today are living in, and the one in which adults today have lived (Pipher, 1994). It has been found that "an inner sense of connection with others is a centralizing feature of women's development and that psychological crisis in women's lives stem from disconnections." (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 3) It is therefore appropriate to encourage positive relationships during this critical time.

Pipher describes three main factors recognized as contributors to the identity confusion for females during adolescence. The first developmental level factor is physically evident. This concerns the psychological and physical changes during this time. The second factor is the American culture that values the worth of a person by appearance. The third factor for female adolescents is the relationship with their parents, who are needed most during this time, yet, because of new pressures, are turned away.

Pipher explains the importance of listening, participating, and encouraging girls to see themselves as unique and interesting people, but parents alone can not fully accomplish this goal (Pipher, 1994). A critical time for intervention in young girls' lives is the late elementary and middle school years by both teachers and administrators in the girls' schools (Debold, 1995). One response to the crisis of young girls is the development of self-esteem programs within the schools (Turgeon, 1983). This type of

“community inquiry” enables young women to examine directly the cultural forces that seek to define and limit them (Turgeon, 1983).

It is important for researchers and educators to examine programs that may offer this support. One such group has been created by several mothers through a program titled *Celebration* and will be studied throughout this research. The purpose of this study will be to report on this program that has been designed to address identity confusion in adolescent girls. *Celebration* is a mother/daughter program that involves the schools and community, in a “celebration” of girls during this stage in their development.

The Research Question

Through this research, a program to support the difficult stage of adolescence will be reported on by providing information on how parents, educators, and community members can become advocates for female adolescents.

Young girls experiencing the turmoil of adolescence in the disharmony of society are in need of assistance. They are in need of both involvement and awareness in order to change certain values that have evolved. These young girls today are the women of tomorrow that must be protected and aided in their development so that they grow with confidence, high esteem, and a belief in themselves that they have equal opportunities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The *Celebration* program is designed to assist adolescent girls in their developmental struggles. This section will describe researched areas of concern regarding self-esteem in female adolescents. This research supports the implementation of the *Celebration* program, which is designed to assist girls in their development. The topics and descriptions mentioned regarding particular sessions can be found in Appendix section G.

Psychological Development of Females

The attention to theories on the psychological development of females was first derived from the research, beginning in the 1970's, of prominent psychologists such as Nancy Chuodorow, Jean Baker Miller, Harriet Lerner, Carol Tavris, and Carol Gilligan. These women described some basic comparisons between men and women and the results of these gender differences on psychological functioning. Carol Gilligan and the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls Development released the book *In a Different Voice* which describes the different ways in which males and females view relationships and their communication patterns (Gilligan, 1984). This research team has continued to spend many years in the field studying female development. The book *Meeting at the Crossroads* describes the research on adolescent development through a study at a single sex school in Cleveland. This research found that it is the culture that contributes to the self-esteem crisis for young girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Young girls learn about being women from both the men and the women that are around them and this is key to how they view themselves (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Adolescence is a

time when young girls lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, and their sense of themselves and their character (Gilligan & Brown, 1992).

Adolescent Girls

Mary Pipher, a psychologist, describes the changes adolescent girls go through in her book *Reviving Ophelia*. She describes adolescent girls as “saplings in the storm” because of the turmoil during this time of their development (Pipher, 1994). She describes girls losing their resiliency, optimism, becoming less curious, and more inclined to take risks (Pipher, 1994). Girls lose their assertive, energetic personalities and become more deferential, self-critical and depressed, and they begin reporting great unhappiness with their own bodies (Pipher, 1994). Some reasons for this are the pressures society places on young girls to split into true and false selves, putting aside their authentic selves and displaying only a part of themselves (Pipher, 1994). It is this pressure to split that depresses girls because they can sense that they are being pressured to be people they are not and they blame themselves or their families for this “problem with no name.” (Pipher, 1994). Pipher identifies three main reasons that adolescent girls are vulnerable during this stage in their development. The first is the many struggles that are taking place such as changes in physical appearance and defining their personality and values. Second is American cultural values that place emphasis on appearance and reveal sexism. Third is the distancing from parents during this time period. As they encounter these new struggles they turn away from their parents and turn to peers for support (Pipher, 1994). Parents are aware of the changes that take place in their daughters during this time period but struggle for ways to stay involved and protect them (Pipher, 1994).

A study conducted by Patricia Hersch described her observations and experiences researching adolescents. She spent three years attending schools and social interactions and talking with adolescent males and females. She learned from this research the struggles and challenges that adolescents face and how little parents and community members know about this time period (Hersch, 1999). Hersch describes adolescence as a “different world” that most adults are unaware of and she reports on eight adolescents and their journey through development. She concludes that this is a stage where profound growth occurs and that parents need to stay involved instead of removing themselves (Hersch, 1999).

Gender Bias in Schools

The differential treatment of the students by gender is still a significant concern for educators (McEwin, 1995). There have been many studies conducted that discovered the existence of discrimination against females in the classroom. The two most recognized studies are the American Association of University Women’s 1992 report and Myra and David Sadkers’ reports of 1994 and 1995. These publications challenged people’s perceptions by revealing startling statistics of gender biases in schools. When the AAUW released the 1992 study, “How Schools Shortchange Girls”, gender equity research and attention significantly increased. The AAUW study was a summary of 1,331 girls’ experiences in elementary, middle, and high school that identified sexism as highly prevalent in schools (AAUW, 1992).

According to David Sadker, “Teachers unconsciously make males the center of instruction and give them more frequent and focused attention . . . increased teacher attention contributes to enhanced student performance . . . girls lose out in this equation.”

(Sadker, 1999, p. 24). A more recent study by the AAUW showed that while the gender gap in performance in math and science has decreased and that girls have enrolled in more math and science courses, they are still behind in SAT performance (AAUW, 1998). However, a new gender gap has been created in the area of technology, with boys enrolling in more advanced courses and girls enrolling in word processing and clerical courses (AAUW, 1998).

The issues of gender bias assume more critical importance for adolescent females. The period of adolescence has been identified as a crucial stage in development for most young girls. A study conducted by Peggy Orenstein titled, "School Girls" described her observations in modern classrooms. She spent time in both a suburban school and an urban school, observing and interviewing female students and teachers. Orenstein describes from her research, both inside and outside of the schools: scenes of girls silence in math classes, emphasis placed on physical appearance, pressures regarding sex, eating disorders, sexual harassment, pressures to be accepted by peers, obligations to be a "junior mother", academic discrimination, and numerous other scenes of girls struggling (Orenstein, 1994).

The research done by Sadker and Sadker shows that girls are more invisible in schools, receive less praise, have fewer teacher interactions with complex and abstract questioning, and are provided less participatory instruction than boys (Sadker, 1997). This nonverbal feedback and poor instruction from educators is devastating for young adolescent girls desperately holding on to their confidence both socially and academically. It is essential during this critical time period that girls be treated fairly in schools to counter-balance these negative obstacles that they face during their

adolescence. According to Elizabeth Debold, a member of the Harvard research team, “The critical time for intervention in girls’ lives is the late elementary and middle school years, and the teachers and administrators of these schools can make a real difference in the lives of the next generation of young women” (Debold, 1995, p. 23).

The *Celebration* program promotes a cooperative learning atmosphere at sessions and during activities. Cooperative learning methods utilize small groups and enable students to work together to effectively increase individual learning and are effective instructional methods for females (Lasley & Matczynski, 1997). “Cooperative learning not only focuses on the content knowledge that students need to learn, but also the social interactions between and among students as they begin to explore ideas together” (Lasley & Matczynski, 1997, p. 271). According to research done by Lasley and Matczynski, females “tend to value cooperation rather than competition, working together in teams, and helping others achieve tasks and responsibilities” (Lasley & Matczynski, 1997, p. 48). According to the National Middle School Association’s stated beliefs, “Educators serve their students well when they model inclusive, collaborative, and team-oriented approached to learning” (NMSA, 1995).

Improving Self-Esteem in Adolescent Girls

There have been several studies that describe the impact of positive relationships on adolescent girls’ self-esteem. A study conducted using 178 eighth grade girls found that the best predictor of self-esteem was the quality of interaction between mothers and daughters (Lackovic-Grgin, Dekovic, & Opacic, 1994). This study’s results support the *Celebration* program’s theme of the importance of the interaction with significant others for the development of self-esteem.

A second study of 104 male and female adolescents showed that there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and mothers' positive communication patterns (Killeen & Forehand, 1998). This study also found a correlation between adolescents' behavior problems and their mothers' positive communications (Killeen & Forehand, 1998). This study supports the *Celebration* program's theme of providing an opportunity for communication between mothers and daughters.

A third study describes the positive effects on self-esteem when adolescent girls are provided with assertiveness training. A group of 148 adolescent girls from a suburban middle class city were involved in a study to measure the effectiveness of assertiveness training (Stake, DeVille, & Pennell, 1986). The results discovered that self-esteem rose after the training and had long term benefits for the adolescent girls, their parents, and teachers (Stake, et al, 1986). This study supports the *Celebration* program's theme of improving self-esteem and the positive results for participants in the program.

The literature reviewed for this research demonstrates the need for a program such as *Celebration*. The research shows the psychological turmoil of the adolescent girl, the inequity in the schools, the gender specific struggles due to social values, and the reasons for providing support for young girls before they enter the "storm". This review has also described the successes of a similar program and the confirmed reasons for this success. The literature supports a program for adolescent girls, through the schools, with a parent to create positive relationships and increase self-esteem.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

An Overview

The purpose of this study is to report on a program that has been designed to address the difficulties of adolescence for girls. The research describes in detail the specific processes and agenda of this program throughout a two-year period. This research enables those interested in understanding and creating a similar program to have a skeleton model for use in their own design within their communities.

Participants and the Setting

This study involves a group of eighth grade girls and their mothers or guardians who have volunteered to participate in the program called *Celebration*. This program was originally developed by four mothers to benefit their daughters' difficult development through adolescence and "celebrate" this period in their lives. The small group of mothers in this study discovered that in this stage of adolescence they were seeing new problem areas evolving with their daughters. They discussed ways to join with their daughters in order to be able to help them through this difficult transition to adulthood.

As mentioned above, this study describes and reports on a program that has been developed by several mothers at a medium sized Catholic elementary school in Louisville, Kentucky. The program's goal is to improve mother-daughter communications and bolster self-esteem for eighth grade girls in the school. The mothers have designed the program so that it will include diverse activities for the girls and their

parents, or guardian, who will attend the meetings with the entire group, in the evenings, once a month, for the school year, a total of nine sessions. The program schedule and the descriptions of such sessions, as they were originally designed, are included in this research.

Role of Researcher

The researcher was a participant observer in this study because of the direct involvement as an observer and the relationships that have been established as an observer. The researcher attempted to observe both the mothers and daughters in the program. Due to the mother and daughter groups separating during certain sessions it was necessary to depend on the coordinating mothers for descriptions of their session and activities, therefore, one of the mothers was a designated observer.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative case study method to understand and evaluate specific aspects of this program. A case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a case to understand its activity (Stake, 1995). This method was ideal as it enabled the researcher to explore the program, setting, and participants through several techniques and gain explicit information. According to Stake, the qualitative evaluator emphasizes the quality of activities and processes, and will depict them in a narrative and interpretive description, using multiple points of view (Stake, 1995).

Data Collection

This study focused on several areas, including observation of the content areas of each session and feedback from the girls and their parents through interviews and surveys. The researcher also examined particular literature choices surrounding this topic area that the coordinators will be using throughout the program. These are located in Appendix I. Each session was observed in a non-disruptive manner through field notes and tape-recording. The data was summarized from field notes derived from the meetings. These notes are complete descriptions of the particular program session, reactions from the program participants, and details from the discussions.

The interviews were conducted with the coordinators and all consenting participants, including speakers. The interview questions related to the girls' perceptions and opinions of the program content and whether or not it was beneficial to them. These same types of questions were asked of each parent. Interviewing was used to gain insight from the program coordinators, teachers, and administrators. The questions were semi-structured and open-ended for the purpose of gaining background information on how the program was developed, specific content, and opinions regarding results. The questions were also designed to obtain information from both the parents and daughters regarding specific behaviors that were demonstrated before and during the program.

The procedure for obtaining permission from the participants was done through a written letter explaining the research and the requirements of each participant's involvement. A copy of this letter is located in Appendix sections A and B. A selected coordinator had the role of liaison each year to provide the group and researcher with

information. This was necessary in the event of the absence of the researcher for particular sessions.

Several materials used within the program are referenced in the research. The coordinators have created an extensive reading list, which has been provided in the References section. These chosen readings will also be identified as they were used in Appendix section G, which describes each of the sessions.

Data Analysis

The organization of data was an ongoing process throughout the year and occurred immediately after each program session. The field notes and interviews from each session were analyzed to look for themes and categories in order to make generalizations regarding the process and progress of the program.

Communicating the Findings

This work has been presented at both the Ohio Middle School Association and National Middle School Association annual conferences. It may also be shared as a model for parents, educators or community members to use in developing similar programs.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

As stated, each participant in the program received written information regarding the research being conducted on the program. However, due to the various personal themes of the sessions, the researcher attempted to be as anonymous as possible during

the programs. Data will be organized through several areas to produce consistency. The results of the interviews and surveys are provided in Appendix E.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This section will describe the results of both groups of 8th grade girls' participation in the *Celebration* program for two years. The first part of this section describes the first year, 1998-1999, and the second part describes the second school year, 1999-2000. The areas described are: the favorite and least favorite sessions of both the daughters and their mothers; how participants initially felt about joining *Celebration*; what has been the most beneficial aspect of joining *Celebration*; and what participants feel is the most important message for girls and mothers of adolescent girls. These results will be summarized and reported in this chapter, the tables, and the Appendices.

The first school year, 1998-1999, of *Celebration* was coordinated by four mothers of girls in the 8th grade. This section will describe the results and aspects of the program according to the four coordinators and their daughters. This information was obtained through video recorded individual interviews. The interviewees were asked the same questions that were in the surveys distributed during the second year, but additional information was disclosed through dialogue and discussion. The coordinators of *Celebration* were asked additional questions regarding the origin of the program for future development of similar programs. Suggestions for beginning a similar program can be found in Appendix F.

The *Celebration* program originated because of four mothers who were concerned by the challenges their daughters would face in the 8th grade. Three of these mothers are schoolteachers and one is a homemaker. After an initial group meeting to discuss the idea, one coordinator contacted the principal and obtained permission to implement the

program. The principal was very enthusiastic about the program and assisted them by allowing them to utilize school resources, such as a meeting place, to support the program. The coordinators then wrote letters directly to the girls in the school who had just completed the 7th grade inviting them and their mothers to join the program. Following the mailing of letters, the coordinators made calls to the mothers of the girls personally inviting them and explaining more about the program. The coordinators obtained donations from the school's Parent Organization and took turns having different mothers bring snack items. Overall, the annual cost of the program was approximately \$200.00 because all but one speaker donated their time to the group and the school provided supplies for the activities.

The first year of Celebration a total of 28 girls were invited to participate. The number that actually participated in any one session was 20. During most sessions the average number of daughters attending was 15. Eight girls from the class never attended any of the sessions. All of the coordinators agreed that this was the most frustrating part of the program. As one mother summarized, "There are great resources available to them and they are just not using them". Reasons mentioned by the mothers for the absences of certain girls included busy schedules with extra-curricular activities, the program not being perceived as "cool", and strong individuals dictating the actions of the clique. The daughters attending the sessions viewed this non-involvement as a loss for the absent girls and were pleased that they were not harassed or teased for continuing to be a part of this program.

The mothers concluded that there were three cliques that made up the 8th grade class. The first clique was an older group of girls, described as "boisterous" and

“mature” who were very involved with athletics. This is the group that did not participate in the program. The second clique was the group all the coordinators identified their own daughters as being a member of and described these girls as having more diverse interests such as music, Girl Scouts, theatre, and sports. The third clique was described as the quieter group that was very focused on their academics. It was the second and third clique that had an opportunity to breakdown barriers and become closer with one another through the *Celebration* program.

The four daughters of the coordinators discussed some of their initial feelings about joining *Celebration*. Two of the daughters expressed that they were anxious about beginning the group because of the personal information that they anticipated being asked to share during the activities. The other two daughters expressed feelings of excitement about joining the program, however, their mothers shared that they voiced some anxiety about their own mothers coordinating the program. Most of these anxieties disappeared after the first session was so well received by the entire group.

The only session that was not mentioned as a favorite session by the mothers and daughters was the session that the speaker from a local university discussed diverse methods for females to learn mathematics and described successful women in this field. Two of the girls mentioned that this session was “too much like school” and described this session as their least favorite. When asked their favorite session, both the mothers and daughters had a difficult time choosing just one and usually described several of the sessions.

The many benefits described by both the mothers and daughters of this program will be identified by major topic areas for convenience. The benefits of *Celebration*

described by the daughters were consistent with the goals of this program. Two of the girls described the opportunity to express themselves in a safe environment where “no one will laugh at you.” They each described how their friendships have deepened and developed through *Celebration*. They also agreed that they were able to create more friendships through *Celebration*. Two of the girls described how the relationship with their mother has improved through the program because they have the opportunity to talk about new topics. All of the daughters mentioned improved confidence and feelings of “being a better person.” One daughter stated that while in the previous school year boys would easily tease her in class, because of *Celebration* she is now able to tell them to “back-off” and the teasing has discontinued.

The mothers agreed with all the benefits that the daughters mentioned and added a few of their own. One mother described how being a part of *Celebration* gave her an opportunity to demonstrate to her daughter how much she cares about what is going on in her life and the challenges and issues she is dealing with. She continues to say that her daughter has always known that she is there for her but this has given her the opportunity to demonstrate it each month.

All the mothers agreed that having this “special” time with their daughters was one of the greatest benefits of *Celebration*. It gave them an opportunity to discuss topics in a comfortable environment that may have been avoided or ignored. The mothers also mentioned the benefit of their daughters having the opportunity to see other women in the community as positive role models. The mothers described how valuable the information that has been gained from this program was for both themselves and their

daughters. The mothers also agreed that the speakers, material resources, and mentors from the high school were invaluable to this program.

The four daughters described the problems for adolescent girls as all stemming from peer pressure. All of the girls mentioned the pressure girls their age face to be “beautiful” and how such pressure results in problems such as eating disorders. Two of the girls mentioned pressure to have premarital sex and pregnancy as problems for their age group. All of the girls mentioned the prevalence of drugs and alcohol and the pressure to use such substances. However, two added that they had never been pressured themselves to use drugs or alcohol. One of the girls described the most difficult pressures in her own class was to be “cool and popular” and how this can be the most difficult pressure for some girls.

The mothers agreed with all of the challenges that the daughters mentioned and commented on how they had observed their daughters face some of these pressures. One of the mothers described how she became more aware of the pressures through literature available on adolescent girls. She described how unaware girls are of the negative messages and portrayal of women in the media, movies, and music. She feels that these pressures are also substantial for adolescent girls. The mothers agreed that girls need, yet often lack, the confidence in themselves to “stand strong” against these pressures and negative messages.

The mothers advice for other mothers’ of adolescent girls was to be involved during this turbulent time in their daughters’ development. One mother described how during this age the adolescent may tell the parent to stay away, but the parent should remember that the young girl needs the parent and may not know how to explain this.

The mothers encouraged other mothers to take advantage of this time in the girls' development and to be a part of it. One mother advised others to become educated with the issues that affect girls and be aware of what is going on both in and out of the home. Another mother encouraged others to be proactive with girls' issues and begin communicating early to develop the needed skills. One mother encouraged other mothers to "tell her from the time she is small that she is as strong as a boy and there is nothing that she can't do. "

The mothers each responded to the question, "What do you want your daughter to like best about being a girl?" Two of the mothers described the unique experience that a woman has of giving birth and being a mother, yet stated that this would be their daughters choice and that they have many options. One added that she hopes her daughter understands that there are strengths that girls have and strengths that boys have and these complement each other. Another mother stated that she tells her daughter about a female's "sixth sense" that enables women to invest a stronger level of their emotional involvement. One mother also said she wants her daughter to know her individuality is what will determine who she is, not her gender. One mother recited lines from the poem written by Maya Angelou called, "Phenomenal Woman" that she reads with her daughter, which can be found in Appendix section J.

This concludes the summary of the interviews from the first year of *Celebration*. Additional information on the specific sessions and materials used can be found in the Appendices. According to the information provided by these program participants the first year of this program reached the initial goals of improving the self-esteem of these 8th grade girls and creating stronger mother/daughter relationships. Only one negative

aspect of this program was mentioned and this was in regard to the eight absent girls. Future assessments of this program may involve follow-up interviews with these girls during their high schools years to evaluate their perception of the effectiveness of this program.

The second school year, 1999-2000, of *Celebration* was coordinated by two mothers: one a homemaker and craft-artist, and the other a part-time employee at the school where the girls attend. This section will describe interviews with these two mothers as well as the results of surveys that were distributed to the entire group. The use of surveys was implemented in the second year so that more information could be gained from a larger number of people. The use of interviews in the first year provided more in-depth information that was not necessary to repeat in the second year. The surveys that were used are located in Appendices C and D on pages 46-47. The results of the surveys are reported in Appendix E. The Appendix provides a list of each of the answers provided by the participants. Each response has been identified with the number of similar responses and the category in which the response was placed. All the information that was written on the survey was reported and counted. Therefore these results do not match numerically with the number of participants. Each participant's response was compiled into the data for this survey.

The two mothers that coordinated the *Celebration* program the second year obtained all the materials and information from the previous coordinators. They were very enthusiastic about beginning the program and met with the coordinators to discuss ideas and topics. They were both very pleased by the success of the program, which they

evaluated by the high number of attendees. The second year of *Celebration* didn't have a particular clique of girls that did not participate. All but one of the girls in the 8th grade class attended at least one session. The coordinators organized the schedules of the sessions with coaches of the schools athletic teams, which they both felt increased the attendance.

One factor that may have also increased the attendance the second year was the 7th grade girls' increased exposure to the program during their 7th grade school year (1998-1999) and the final session of *Celebration*. The final session of *Celebration*, 1998-1999, provided an opportunity for the 7th grade girls to meet and speak with the previous members of *Celebration* and to "pass the torch." This group was also shown the video produced from the interviews obtained for this research in order to introduce them to the program and gain a better understanding of the activities and the benefits of being involved during their own 8th grade year (1999-2000).

The surveys describing the second year of *Celebration* have been obtained from 21 daughters and 16 mothers. These results will be summarized in this section and also in the tables on pages 28-36.

Table One describes the favorite sessions of both the mothers and daughters that they identified in the surveys and interviews. There were a total of nine sessions during the school year and the content of each of these sessions is described in Appendix G. Although the rock climbing session was the favorite of the daughters according to the surveys, the session that introduced the topic of premature sex and the session in which a high school guidance counselor brought high school students to mentor the group were also mentioned in the surveys as mothers' and daughters' favorite sessions. It is

important to note that when the high school girls mentored the daughters the session ended with a question and answer period. The high school girls answered the daughters' questions about high school parties, boyfriends, and popularity. Both of these sessions addressed what the daughters considered to be real issues for their age group and this may be the reason they identified them as favorite sessions.

Table Two describes both the daughters' and mothers' favorite aspects of *Celebration* sessions. Both the mothers and daughters identified relationship building as one of their favorite parts of the *Celebration* sessions. This was also documented in Table Five in which daughters felt that the relationships that were gained were the most beneficial aspect of the *Celebration* program.

Table Three identifies the least favorite aspects of *Celebration*. It is important to note that the majority of girls did not respond to this question or stated that they did not have a "least" favorite part of this program. The information gained in this section is helpful in planning future sessions to determine which activities are the most beneficial. In both years of *Celebration* the negative side was the absence of other members of the 8th grade class and their mothers. Although in the second year the number of attendees increased, there were still a few girls absent from some of the sessions. During an interview one of the coordinators stated that she felt this was due simply to over-commitments on the part of the other girls rather than negative feelings about the program. Two members mentioned that one negative aspect of *Celebration* is that it ends after 8th grade. Other mothers shared some of these thoughts and feelings during the interviews. Future research on this project may be directed toward the continuation of

this program or a reunion session to bring these daughters and their mothers back together.

Table Four describes the initial feelings of the daughters in regard to joining *Celebration* with their mothers. The majority of these responses were positive, however some of the girls wrote that they were unsure of what to expect so these responses were placed in the “Uncertain” category.

Table Five describes the daughters’ opinions regarding the most beneficial aspects of the *Celebration* program for themselves. Building relationships, increasing confidence and increasing self-awareness were the most frequent responses made. During the last session, several girls spoke to the 7th grade girls about the benefits of *Celebration* and all identified the friendships they made and an increase in self-confidence.

Table Six describes the current problems that exist for adolescent girls determined by the daughters. The highest response was peer pressure and this was voiced in every session. Peers were the central aspect of every session. Daughters immediately separated from their mothers at the beginning every session and when other girls arrived they were hugged and pulled into a small circle of girls talking and laughing. This circle would eventually grow until all the girls were seated near each other. Unfortunately, there was not a *Celebration* session that focused solely on peer pressure although the subject was brought up during several activities. This may be a topic to explore in future *Celebration* sessions to enable the girls’ need to fully understand the origin of peer pressure as they work together in a group such as *Celebration*. This could help them be allies for one another by better understanding peer pressure.

The other categories that received high responses were: low confidence, pressure to engage in premature sex, pressure to use drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol, and the emphasis placed on physical appearance. These areas were covered in *Celebration* and were also covered in school. The coordinators attempted to not overlap with any school programs that were already in place to avoid repetition.

Table Seven describes the mothers' opinions of the benefits for themselves and their daughters as a result of being a part of *Celebration*. The mothers' felt that the opportunity to increase their communication was the highest benefit. One mother even mentioned that the five-minute ride home in the car after a session was extremely beneficial. Mothers mentioned in both the first and second year of *Celebration* the larger peer group that this program encouraged. The mothers described how their daughters had a specific peer group in which they socialized and being a part of *Celebration* exposed them to other girls to include in their peer group. Other benefits included observing other mother/daughter relationships and communication methods, improving their own relationship, being involved in a noncompetitive activity, providing an environment to observe the daughters' development, and the increasing of self-esteem.

Table Eight describes the advice the mothers would pass on to other mothers of adolescent girls. The highest response was regarding communication and making the time for this program to happen. This was closely related to the second highest advice, which involved spending time on the relationship. Mothers also advised other mothers to create programs similar to *Celebration*.

Table Nine describes mothers' hopes for their daughters for their future. These responses were taken from the survey question "What do you want your daughter to like

about being a girl?" All the mothers answered this question by describing what they generally want for their daughter therefore this is how the responses were tabulated. Most mothers wanted their daughters to know they could accomplish anything they desired. The second highest hope was their daughter's happiness and satisfaction with herself. These areas are both closely related to self-esteem and confidence, which are goals of the program.

This concludes the summary of the interviews from the second year of *Celebration*. Additional information on the specific sessions and materials used can be found in the Appendices. According to the information provided by these program participants the second year of this program continued to reach the initial goals through building stronger relationships between both mothers and daughters and increasing the daughter's confidence by increasing their own self-awareness.

Table One

Daughters' and Mothers' Favorite Celebration Sessions

	Daughters	Mothers
Rock climbing	9	0
Sex has a Price Tag	4	6
Guidance counselor & high school girls	6	4
Self defense	2	3
Group discussions	1	1

Table Two

Daughters' and Mothers' Favorite Aspect of Celebration

	Daughters	Mothers
Relationship with others	11	3
Relationship with mother/daughter/self	1	3
Learning/observing each other	0	5
Variety/enjoyment of activities	0	2

Table Three

Daughters' and Mothers' Least favorite Aspect/Session

	Daughters	Mothers
Dietician	3	1
Sex has a Price Tag	1	0
First session	0	1
Aspect of a particular session	0	1
Absence of mothers/daughters	1	3
Not enough sessions/ending of program	1	1

Table Four

Daughters' Initial Feelings about Celebration

	Daughters
Positive	11
Negative	5
Uncertain	4

Table Five

Daughters' Opinion on the Most beneficial Aspect of Celebration

	Daughters
Relationships (peers, mom, peers' moms)	6
Confidence	6
Self-awareness	6
Information	3
Skills	2

Table Six

Daughters' Opinion on Problems for Adolescent Girls

Peer pressure	14
Lacking confidence	6
Premature sex	5
Drugs, alcohol, smoking	4
Emphasis on physical appearance	3

Table Seven

Mothers' Opinion of the Most Significant Benefit of Celebration for Themselves and/or Their Daughter

Increased communication	8
Increased size of peer group	4
Observing other relationships	3
Improved relationship	2
Non-competitive activity	1
Opportunity for observing development	1
Increased self-esteem	1

Table Eight

Mothers' Advice for Other Mothers of Adolescent Girls

Communicate (talk & listen)	7
Spend time on relationship	5
Create a "Celebration" program	4
Allow them to develop	2
Share your views and values	1

Table Nine

Mothers' Hopes for Daughters

Opportunities to accomplish anything	8
Comfortable with herself	8
Ability to have fun	3
Not focused on pleasing others	1
Not focused on physical appearance	1
Speaks her mind	1

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This research has described a program designed to improve self-esteem as well as mother/daughter and peer relationships for adolescent girls. Many benefits have been identified with this program as well as areas for improvement. This program is easily adaptable into most settings and its design is easily replicated. Through the use of this research it is hoped that similar programs may be implemented in other areas. This section will describe alternative uses for the program, suggestions for designing a similar one, and discuss the reasons for its effectiveness.

The program titled *Celebration* was implemented in a medium sized Catholic school in Louisville, Kentucky but could be implemented in many other diverse environments. It has been identified that during adolescence, girls are more vulnerable than boys to a decrease in self-esteem (AAUW, 1992). It has also been previously noted that reduced self-esteem vary among different ethnic groups (Orenstein, 1994). For these reasons, programs such as *Celebration* are essential for all female ethnic groups but methods for implementation and topic areas for program sessions may need to be designed for each population.

The mother/daughter emphasis was recognized as an essential part of this program by all of the coordinators. However, each of the coordinators also stated that they encouraged the daughters to come by themselves or with another mother if that girl's own mother could not attend. Coordinators would need to consider this issue when mothers may have younger children at home to care for, or may work in the evenings. Such conflicts would need to be addressed creatively by providing childcare, inviting an

extended female family member, or creating a volunteer mentor program by utilizing adult women in the community.

Alternative activities may also need to be considered in order to implement this program with diverse populations. Ideally, issues affecting girls within a specific population are the focus of program sessions. These issues can be disclosed through a survey or even a pre-Celebration group, in order to determine directly from the girls, the issues or problems they feel are most important.

The problem of daughters' resistance was not a major obstacle for the implementation of *Celebration*, as attendance was fairly high. However, in both years there were still girls that did not join the program or attend all of the sessions. This problem may be more substantial in diverse populations who may not have the encouragement of their family or peers to join the group. Again, creativity is key for finding solutions to this problem. Research and pre-work may be necessary before beginning the group to find out what might motivate the participants to join. This may require cooperation from the schools and teachers to allow participation in the group to be partial credit for the completion of an assignment or as a reward or reinforcement for behavior. Other things that made this program more appealing to the previous participants were the food, prizes, and fun activities such as rock climbing that were available. Creative ways to foster participation so that the young girls give this program a chance will provide the forum for this group to evolve.

Father involvement is an issue that the group must address. The coordinators of *Celebration* intended for this to be an all-female group so that everyone was comfortable discussing female issues. However, there has been research that suggests that young

females with a positive relationship with a father have a higher sense of self-worth (Fawcett, 1993). With this in mind, a similar program to *Celebration* emphasizing the father/daughter relationship may be implemented. Perhaps the program could also provide a session for each, and meet two times a month, one time for mothers and daughters and one time for fathers and daughters. Again, the emphasis for this program are the daughters' growth during this stage in their life. This program has helped mothers to better understand this developmental time and ultimately improved their overall relationship. The same conclusion might be made if fathers were to be involved with this program.

Another question that is frequently asked about this program is "What about the boys?" Although the purpose of this research was to focus on adolescent girls and a particular program to assist them through their developmental struggle and loss of self-esteem, boys are also struggling through this developmental stage. According to Patricia Hersch, the struggle of the adolescent does not know gender, community, or age boundaries and requires the involvement, assistance, and awareness of all adults (Hersch, 1999). The coordinators of *Celebration* and the 8th grade teachers approached other parents about beginning a "boy's group" and although it was discussed, but did not materialize. One *Celebration* coordinator stated that this group would need to be formatted differently with "less talking and more activities" for it to be successful. A group similar to *Celebration* holds many possibilities for an all-male audience but would need to be researched and re-designed to address boys' interests and concerns using methods that would appeal to their age level and learning preference.

One of the major benefits of the *Celebration* program is the ease in which it may be implemented. This statement does not devalue the work and time invested by the coordinators but is an attempt to demonstrate how a program with great benefits for participants can be conveniently implemented in diverse settings. The coordinators of *Celebration* all agree that although this program requires extensive time, sharing these responsibilities with others made it more feasible. These mothers determined at the beginning of the program ideas for sessions and delegated the preparation for each of the sessions. The costs involved in the program are minimal, especially if the school provides a part of the costs for supplies or meeting space. The coordinators received a \$200 donation from the Parent Teacher Organization and spent between \$200-250 each year. The community also offers numerous resources for this program. Many of the speakers were enthusiastic about the uniqueness of this program and donated their time for its purpose. Other organizations donated their products, which were then used as door prizes. These donations and shared workloads helped substantially in the implementation of *Celebration*.

The biggest struggle for the coordinators was getting all of the girls in the 8th grade to join this program. Unfortunately, this would most likely be a struggle for others beginning a similar program. The first year would may be somewhat difficult because the program is new and no one has "tried it" before. The participants of the second year of the *Celebration* program had the opportunity to hear, during the school year and at the final session, what the program was about and that the girls liked being a part of it. These positive opinions may have been an influence on the higher attendance in the second year. The last session of "passing the torch" to the 7th grade girls may be an important

area for future research in finding out what specifically made the next groups want to join this program.

The purpose of this research is to provide a skeleton model and information for others to use to begin similar programs for adolescents. The Appendix section F offers suggestions for beginning a program similar to *Celebration*, which was originally written by one of the original coordinators. These suggestions are helpful in regard to administration and management of the group. The Appendix section G describes each of the *Celebration* sessions to provide ideas that could be used in future groups. The reference list is useful for obtaining many types of resources and materials on adolescent girls. The letters sent to the participants by the coordinators are available in Appendix H to provide a general format to inform participants about the program. This research provides optimal resources for designing future *Celebration* type groups.

The problems and obstacles adolescent girls face have been discussed throughout this research. It has been demonstrated that this challenging period of development should involve assistance from schools, parents/guardians, and the community. The *Celebration* program supports this difficult stage of development by providing a forum for parents/guardians, educators, and community members to become advocates for female adolescents.

The adolescent girl experiences the turmoil of societal pressures to look and act in a particular way and these pressures result in a loss of a true self and a voice in her society. Change can only be done through involvement, awareness, recognition, and validation of these problems by parents, schools, and community members. The adolescent girl passes through this stage into being a woman and must be protected and

aided in her development so that she will grow with confidence, high esteem, and a belief in herself that she will have equal opportunities to accomplish her goals.

APPENDIX A

Shayne Simpson Downing

Address

Phone

email

September 21, 1999

Dear Parents and Students:

I am contacting you because of your involvement in the program titled "Celebration" at your school, St. Margaret Mary.

I am a graduate student in the counseling program at the University of Dayton and would like to study this program for the topic of my master's thesis. This study would consist mostly of silent observations during some of the programs that have been scheduled. The purpose of this research is to share a description of the Celebration program with others that are interested in designing similar programs. I would also be using the current literature as background for my research. I will be more than happy to share my observations with you throughout the duration on this project.

As for direct involvement from you, I would like to conduct interviews with all of you at your convenience. These would be informal and consist of questions regarding your thoughts of the program.

I thank you for allowing me this academic opportunity. You are a part of something that is very unique. I feel privileged to be included in it. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this project.

Sincerely,

Shayne Simpson Downing

APPENDIX B

Project Title: A Self-Esteem Building Program for Girls - A One Year Study

Investigator: Shayne Simpson Downing

Purpose of Research: This research is describing the program titled, "Celebration".

Expected Duration of Study: The research will end in May, 2000.

Procedure: The investigator will describe the details of the meetings and interview the participants.

Alternative Procedures: No alternative procedures exist in this research project.

Anticipated Risks and / or Discomfort: There are no anticipated risks in participating in this research.

Benefits to the Participant: You will gain knowledge and resources about the research subject through the debriefing at the end of participation.

Confidentiality: No records of your child's participation in this research will be disclosed to others. Names will not be revealed in any document resulting from this research.

Contact Person for Questions or Problems: If you have questions about the research please contact Shayne Downing, at phone number-----. Questions about the rights of the subject should be addressed to -----, Ph.D., Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, address, phone.

Consent to Participate: I have voluntarily decided to allow my child to participate in this research project. The investigator named above has adequately answered all questions that I have about this research, the procedures involved, and my child's participation. I understand that the investigator named above will be available to answer any questions about the procedures of this research. I also understand that I may refuse for my child to participate or voluntarily terminate my child's participation at any time without penalty.

September 21, 1999

To Whom It May Concern:

My signature below acknowledges that I have read the above information and have agreed for my child to be part of a Master's project associated with the University of Dayton.

It also authorizes a University of Dayton Graduate Student to interview and observe my child as they participate in the Celebration program at St. Margaret Mary school. I understand that this is only for the purpose of a graduate research project and the results will not include the name of my child. I also understand that I can choose to exclude my child from this project at anytime with no consequence.

Thank you,

Child's/Student's name (Subject)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Shayne Simpson Downing (Investigator)

APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument for Adolescent girls

Survey

Name (Optional) _____

1. What activities are you involved in both inside and outside of school?
2. What is your average letter grade?
3. What is your favorite subject in school?
4. What are your career aspirations?
5. What part of yourself are you most proud of?
6. What part of Celebration have you enjoyed the most? The least?
7. Do you think that girls your age should participate in a program like Celebration?
Why or why not?
8. What was your first reaction to joining Celebration?
9. What has been your favorite session? Why?
10. What has been the biggest benefit to you or what have you learned the most because of your involvement in Celebration?
11. What do you think is one of the biggest problems girls your age are facing today? Do you have any ideas about possible solutions?

APPENDIX D

Survey Instrument for Mothers

Name _____

Daughter's Name _____

1. How would you describe your daughter's academic performance?
2. What types of activities is your daughter involved in both inside and outside of school?
3. Why did you join Celebration?
4. What part of joining this group has been the biggest surprise? Disappointment?
5. What have you learned the most from participating in Celebration?
6. Which Celebration meeting was your most favorite? Least favorite? Why?
7. What part of Celebration has been the greatest benefit to your daughter?
8. What would you want to tell other mothers of girls this age? Mothers of boys?
9. What do you want your daughter to like best about being a girl?

APPENDIX E

Survey Results

Daughters Surveys**Favorite Session**

Rock Climbing (9)
Sex has a price tag (4)
High School Girls (6)
Group discussions (1)
Self Defense (2)

Favorite Aspect

Being with friends (7)
Getting to know others (1)
Bonding with friends (1)
Became better friends (2)
Closer with mom (1)

Least favorite Aspect/Session

Dietician (3)
None (12)
Sex has a price tag (1)
Not everyone attended (1)
Not enough time (1)

Joining Celebration

Excitement (3)
Nervous (1)
Fun because of friends (1)
Sounded fun (5)
Be with mom (1)
Unsure what to expect (3)
Doubtful (1)
Do I have to? (1)
Curious (1)
Unsure about liking it and if friends would go (1)
Unsure but thought it would be fun (1)
Skeptical (1)
This is gonna suck/mom will make a fool out of me (1)
Wanted to be part of (1)

Most beneficial Aspect

Know peers, mom, peers moms and myself better (1)
 Learn more about self (3)
 Communication with mom/friends (1)
 Teamwork and trust (1)
 Closer to classmates/more outgoing (1)
 Relationship with mom (1)
 Gain confidence (3)
 Be self/own person (2)
 Knowing the consequences of sex (2)
 Get to know everyone (1)
 Learn more about others, their relationships with mothers, and relationship with my mom/friends (1)
 Like self and not be embarrassed or ashamed of who I am (1)
 Learned many new things (1)
 Others feel lonely, become closer to in 8th grade class (1)
 Be proud of self (1)

Problems for girls of this age

Peer Pressure, drugs, speak-up
 Pressure from males (sex) (4)
 Drugs, peer pressure, premature sex (1)
 Peer pressure (11)
 Pressure to look an act a certain way (1)
 Being confident (1)
 Insecurity (1)
 Smoking, Drinking (2)
 Knowing right/wrong (1)
 Worry about what others think of them, Appearance (1)
 Stand up for beliefs/not back down (1)
 Feeling excluded (1)
 Fitting in/feeling good about body (1)
 Put downs (1)

Mothers Surveys

Favorite Session/Aspect

Spending time with daughter (2)
 Diverse group shared feelings (1)
 Daughters enjoyment (2)
 Knowing myself and knowing daughter/Openness (1)
 Spending time with other moms (1)
 Variety of activities/speakers (1)
 Moms and daughters had fun (1)
 Fun to watch the girls (1)
 First meeting/games interacting with other mothers (1)
 Learning about the girls/apprehensions/joys (1)
 Learning about daughter/watching her in a group setting (1)

Favorite Session/Aspect

Self Defense (3)
 High School girls (3)
 Sex has a Price Tag (6)
 Mothers Spending time with guidance counselor (1)
 The information (1)

Least favorite session/Aspect

Not all the 8th grade girls/mothers involved (3)
 First session/uncomfortable with ice breakers (1)
 Losing their voice – comparison to “Little Mermaid” movie (1)
 Dietician (1)
 Ending at end of 8th grade school year (1)

Most Beneficial Aspect for you/your daughter

Being with entire class of girls/not just peer group (4)
 Being with other girls and their mothers/watch interactions (2)
 Discussing issue (1)
 Building self-esteem (1)
 Mother/Daughter outings will continue (1)
 Opened up discussions (1)
 Enjoyed sessions/daughter wants me there (1)
 Participate in something at school that wasn't competitive (1)
 More open (1)
 Watching her develop into a young lady (1)
 Finding out other mothers were going through the same thing (1)
 Topics were easier to talk about (1)
 Mothers and daughters have a lot in common (1)
 Gave an opportunity to talk (1)
 Answering questions daughters have (1)
 Opening up to others more – the five minute ride home after the sessions (1)

Tell mothers of girls this age

Try it (Celebration) (1)

Spend as much time as possible, be open and honest, willing to talk about anything (1)

Talk (2)

Keep Communication open/LISTEN (1)

Celebration is a great way to get to know one another better (1)

Don't rush their growing up (1)

Be there for them/Listen to them (1)

Let them know you are interested in what they feel and think (1)

Be with them as much as possible and share your views and values (1)

Spend individual time with daughter (1)

Celebration is wonderful experience (something different - sports, studies, mall) (1)

Communicate all of the time/even regarding disagreements (1)

Let them be what they want to be – Don't sweat the small stuff (1)

Start a program like Celebration, answer their questions (1)

Be a part of their lives and listen (1)

Like best about being a girl

Being herself (1)

Opportunity to be whatever she wants (1)

Feeling good about herself and having fun (2)

Have fun, Believe in your heart, Common Sense first (1)

Comfortable with who she is (2)

Can accomplish anything she wants (6)

Be who she is and not act a certain way to please someone else (1)

Be happy about herself (2)

Independent (1)

More than just physical appearance (1)

Speak her mind/not apologize (1)

Show strengths, strength, confidence, organized, sensible, loving, respectful (1)

She is a special gift from God (1)

There are not limits because she is a girl (1)

APPENDIX F

Suggestions for Organizing a “Group for Girls”

Written by Joan Lacy – Coordinator of Celebration

- Brainstorm with coordinators of the group a few months prior to the first meeting to begin the planning. This time can be used to discuss issues that will be addressed and share potential contacts to be used for the presentations.
- Obtain input from someone who has previous experience in female groups. For example, we received helpful advice from a local teacher who works with the federal grant program, “Math for Girls Club”. Girls Scout leaders are also excellent resources.
- Encourage everyone involved to read materials on adolescent girls. Local bookstores contain an expansive collection of books and information on girls’ issues. As a group we all read and discussed “Reviving Ophelia”, “Things Will Be Different for My Daughter”, and issues of “Daughters” magazine.
- Communicate with members of the school about the girls’ group and about each of the meetings. We created this group with the invaluable support of the principal, teachers, and counselor of the girls’ school.
- Focus on fun. The meetings should center on the needs and interests of the girls and they will enjoy activities much more than a lecture format. We used door prizes as a way to begin each meeting with a quick game.
- Allow time for socializing at each of the meetings. This enables the girls to share and discuss the activities. For example, we would begin and end each meeting as a group with a reading or a song.
- Utilize high school girls as presenters. We used two different high school groups of girls who came with their teacher/counselor and mentored the girls. These meetings were favorites because the high school girls identified and shared experiences about their own adolescence.
- Trust the presenters. It is important to respect each of the topics and allow the presenters to talk privately, if necessary, with the girls. This creates an environment that is more conducive for honest communication. For example, often times we would meet in a separate room to discuss current readings to enable the girls to speak more openly in the group discussions.
- Make requests for funding from the PTO or creatively organize a fundraiser as a group. These funds assist in paying for materials for activities, speakers, and snacks for the meetings. Almost all of our speakers were eager to volunteer their time so the budget required was fairly small.

APPENDIX G

Description of Celebration Sessions

Note: Every Celebration meeting began in either a circle or gathering consisting of all participants (mothers and daughters). A mother and daughter would lead each of the meetings with a poem, prayer, song, skit, or reading of their choice and then the planned activities for the session would begin. Sessions often concluded in a similar format providing a token to the participants that is meaningful to the leaders, i.e. bookmark, cards with quotes, pennies for "penny for a thought for your mother/daughter".

Celebration 1998-1999

July - Welcome Meeting –

Ice breaker Activities - Presented by School Counselor

This meeting was presented by a school counselor and involved both the girls and their mothers. Activities to help get to know one another better were conducted throughout the session. One activity was placing a girl in the middle of the circle of everyone while everyone clapped for her. All but three of the girls were very uncomfortable with this experience.

August - Boundary Setting - Presented by High School Girls

A group of high school girls came to this meeting with their guidance counselor to conduct an activity on boundary setting. The girls worked with high school girls while mothers discussed a reading from the book, "Things will be Different for my Daughter" with the guidance counselor. The high school girls discussed using posters the definition and examples of the three types of boundaries: physical, emotional, and sexual. The girls then created a circle with layers listing their definitions of their own boundaries and placed their picture in the middle of the circle.

September - Girls in the Media - Presented by High School Girls

This group session was led by four high school girls from a local school. The girls were then divided into two groups with two leaders in each group to design two posters. The posters were prepared by finding and cutting out popular magazine pictures that portray women/girls negatively or positively. The leaders and girls then had casual discussions in which the girls asked the high school girls question about being in high school. A representative from each group then shared these posters with the entire group.

October - Collages and Letters to self - Presented by Coordinators

During this group session the girls created poster collages to describe, "Who I really am" that they were asked to continue throughout the year. They also wrote letters to themselves to open on their 16th, 18th, and 21st, birthdays and designed colorful bottles to place the letters inside.

November - **Achieving Goals** – Presented by a Math Club Coordinator and Airline Pilot
The math club coordinator led the first half of the meeting girls. The girls were involved in an activity in which they had to read local news stories about significant women and find out about their local contributions. The female airline pilot led the second half of the session to discuss the challenges she faced about being in a male dominated career. She answered questions and passed out information on bookmarks about significant women such as Amelia Earhart.

December – No Meeting

January - **Rock Climbing**

The mothers and daughters went to a local rock climbing facility and were taught how to climb and support each other in climbing. This was a favorite session and the daughters were very enthusiastic throughout the activity.

February - **Rejection** - Presented by Guidance Counselor
Cancelled.

March - **Math Activities** - Presented by Professor

A professor from the University of Louisville led this meeting and discussed significant women of the past and present in the field of math and science. She demonstrated a method of teaching math to girls by reading a story and then completing a cooperative math activity.

April - **Creating the Celebration Quilt** – Presented by Coordinators

This meeting was led by the coordinating mothers. The girls were each given a square of fabric to design that described what Celebration meant to them. One of the coordinating mothers sewed all the squares together and this was made into a quilt to pass on to the 7th grade girls at the final meeting.

May - **Meet with the 7th grade girls to “pass the torch”** – Presented by Coordinators

This meeting involved both the 7th and 8th grade girls and their mothers. The group opened with a brief discussion about Celebration by the coordinators. The video was then shown to the audience. Three 8th grade girls then spoke about what Celebration meant to them and why the 7th grade girls should choose to be a part of it. The quilt that was made in the previous session was then given to the 7th grade girls. The session concluded with pizza and soda.

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August - **Communication Skills/Ice Breakers** – Presented by Guidance Counselor

This meeting was led by the coordinating mothers. Activities to help get to know one another better were conducted throughout the session. Activities such as writing positive phrases on the paper the group member was wearing on her back and throwing tennis balls inside a circle were part of this session.

September - Pain of Rejection - Presented by High School Girls

The group was led by four girls from a local Catholic High School. The mothers met separately with a guidance counselor. The 8th grade girls are separated into a group with a high school girl. They pass out a list of feelings associated with rejection and ask each girl to share a time in her life when she felt rejected. They continued to discuss healthy and unhealthy ways to deal with the pain caused by rejection that are listed on other handouts. The small groups list the healthy ways on a piece of a cut out heart and then each group presents their piece of the heart to the entire group creating a whole entire heart. The groups return to make bookmarks designed with their names and "healing" words.

October - Dietician/Nutritionist – Presented by Dietician

This session was led by a local dietician. She provided the girls and mothers with information on healthy eating. She passed out several handouts on how to monitor healthy eating and the importance of taking care of the body.

November - Self-Defense for Women– Presented by Self-defense Instructor

The self-defense instructor discussed the different types of abuses: physical, sexual, and emotional. She provided percentages on rape, the different types of perpetrators, and simple ways to protect one's self. She demonstrated with the girls several different techniques to defend themselves against an intruder. The girls were active throughout this session. The instructor concluded by answering questions and reminding the girls that the reason for this session is that they are cared for and loved.

December - Skin Care - Presented by a Skin Care Specialist

A Mary Kay representative led this meeting. She explained general skin care methods, performed facials on the daughters, and gave the mothers hand massages. She also involved the group in a discussion of the idea of beauty being within the self.

January - When Girls Lose their Voice – Presented by the Youth Ministry Director

This session was presented by the Ministry Director for Youth from the Archdiocese of Louisville. She involved the mothers and daughters in a discussion of how and what happens when girls lose their voice in society. She demonstrated this with the video, "The Little Mermaid" and discussed how the main character lost her voice. She divided the mothers and daughters into groups where they separated to discuss prepared questions. She concluded by matching the mothers with their daughters for a discussion regarding girls from losing their voice.

February - Sex has a Price Tag - Presented by Coordinators

The mothers and daughters watched and discussed the video "Sex has a Price Tag". The daughters and mothers created small poster collages with pictures and words that would help them stay strong and committed to themselves the strength to have courage, dignity and self-respect.

March - Images of Women - Presented by High School Girls

The meeting was led by four High School girls and began with introductions by

each leader telling the story of their loss of self-esteem and transition into high school and then a short ice-breaker game. The girls were then divided into two groups with two leaders in each group to design two posters. The posters were prepared by finding and cutting out popular magazine pictures that portray women/girls negatively or positively. The leaders and girls then had casual discussions in which the girls asked the high school girls questions about being in high school. A representative from each group then shared these posters with the entire group.

April - Rock Climbing

The mothers and daughters went to a local rock climbing facility and were taught how to climb and support each other in climbing. This was a favorite session and the daughters were very enthusiastic throughout the activity.

May - Letters to self, Meet with the 7th grade girls to "pass the torch"

During this session the girls wrote letters to themselves for their 18th birthday and designed envelopes to place the letters inside. Pizza and soda were served during the activity. The coordinators then passed out framed pictures of the *Celebration* girls to each of the attendees. The 7th grade girls and their mothers arrived for the second half of this session. The second half of the session opened with a brief discussion about *Celebration* by the coordinators. Five 8th grade girls then spoke about what *Celebration* meant to them and why the 7th grade girls should choose to be a part of it. The video was then shown to the audience. The session concluded with door prizes for the 7th grade girls.

APPENDIX H

Letter to Participants

Dear Parents of Eighth-grade girls:

Our Daughters are approaching their final year here at St. Margaret Mary School. It is an exciting year and one full of challenges and opportunities for all of us.

Last year a few mothers began a new program they called *Celebration*. This program was an informal Parent/Daughter discussion group held once a month, focusing on adolescent issues facing girls today. This program became a very positive growth experience for the eighth grade girls, as they were able to share this special time/stage in their life with their Parent or other special adult.

We have been contacted by the mothers who organized this program last year, to carry on the *Celebration* program. We will meet this summer to discuss and/or choose the topics for the monthly meetings. There will be ten meetings, beginning in July through November, then January through May. Each monthly meeting may involve articles, books, videos, or speakers, etc. Some of the topics that were covered this past year were assertiveness, sexuality, peer pressure, professional options, resolving conflicts, talking to the opposite sex, manners and social graces.

The coordinators for *Celebration* this year will be (names and phone numbers). We will be open to any ideas, suggestions, speaker volunteers or connections. Please contact any of the coordinators with your thoughts.

The daughter *Celebration* discussion groups will be held in the School Cafeteria. The first meeting will be in July. We will send you more information as soon as it is finalized.

Lastly, if there are any parents who would like to start a similar program for the boys in 8th grade, please contact the principal. We would be happy to share information we gather on adolescent issues and can work together on some ideas.

We look forward to seeing you!

Thank you,

The Coordinators Names

APPENDIX I

Book Reviews

The first book that the coordinators and mothers of *Celebration* read and discussed was *Reviving Ophelia – Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* by Mary Pipher. Pipher is clinical psychologist and mother of an adolescent girl. This book discusses through case studies issues that affect adolescent girls. Each chapter of the book describes an issue and how Pipher's client is addressing that issue in her life. The topics cover: families, mothers, fathers, divorces, depression, physical appearance, drugs and alcohol, sex and violence, and the generation gap. This book unveils what is truly happening to adolescent girls and describes issues that they are facing.

The second book is titled, *Things will be different for my daughter – A practical guide to building her self-esteem and self-resilience* by Mindy Bingham and Sandy Stryker. The chapters and ideas in this book were used in many of the discussions during *Celebration*. This book contains ideas, strategies, and resources for parents to use with their daughter, such as being critical of movies and the media, how to discuss sensitive topics, locating resources in the community, listing interesting facts about females and much more. This book is an excellent resource for beginning a *Celebration* program.

* Other resources that the coordinators used throughout the *Celebration* program can be found in the Reference listings.

APPENDIX J

Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret
lies.

I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion
model's size

But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.

I say,

It's in the reach of my arms,

The span of my hips,

The stride of my step,

The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

I walk into a room

Just as cool as you please,

And to a man,

The fellows stand or

Fall down on their knees.

They swarm around me,

A hive of honeybees.

I say,

It's in the fire of my eyes,

And the flash of my teeth,

The swing in my waist,

And the joy in my feet.

I'm a woman

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

Men themselves have wondered

What they see in me.

They try so much

But they can't touch

My inner mystery.

When I try to show them,

They say they still can't see.

I say,

It's in the arch of my back,

The sun of my smile,

The ride of my breasts,

The grace of my style,

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

Now you understand

Just why my head's not bowed.

I don't shout or jump about

Or have to talk real loud.

When you see me passing,

It ought to make you proud.

I say,

It's in the click of my heels,

The bend of my hair,

The palm of my hand,

The need for my care.

'Cause I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

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